

Washington, DC -- Congressman Vern Buchanan (FL-13) announced today that he has joined a newly formed congressional caucus to help create jobs in Florida and enhance the ability of Port Manatee to capitalize on the expansion of the Panama Canal.

“As the closest deep water port to the Panama Canal, Port Manatee is in great geographic position to benefit from the on-going expansion of the Panama Canal,” said Buchanan. “As a member of the Friends of Panama Caucus I will work to create jobs by enhancing the Port’s ability to capitalize on new trade opportunities with Panama.”

The Panama Canal is expected to double its capacity by 2014. In addition to joining the Caucus, Buchanan is working to secure federal funds for berth expansions and dredging projects to help the Port accommodate larger, wider ships that will come from the expanded Panama Canal.

Manatee County Port Authority Chairman Ron Getman said, “Congressman Buchanan’s appointment to the caucus demonstrates the importance of Panama to the Manatee-Sarasota region from a national perspective. And it brings into clear focus Port Manatee’s pivotal role in achieving regional economic growth through its relationship with the Panama Canal Authority.”

Buchanan arranged recently for Port Manatee Executive Director David McDonald to meet in Washington, D.C. with the Panamanian Ambassador to the U.S., Jaime Eduardo Aleman.

As a member of the Caucus, Buchanan will work to foster greater economic development opportunities in the United States by engaging Panamanian perspectives on issues of mutual interest and by being a source in Congress on U.S.-Panama relations.

One of his goals is for Congress to ratify the U.S.-Panama Trade Promotion Agreement.